

The Macao SAR Government urges:

- Let's all persist;
- Wash hands frequently;
- Wear a mask properly;
- Avoid crowd gathering;
- Keep a social distance;
- Declare health conditions;
- Reduce leaving Macao.

Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

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THE SOCIAL WELFARE BUREAU SAID YESTERDAY THAT IT CANNOT FORCE ALL NURSERIES TO HALT THEIR SERVICES, ONLY 'STRONGLY RECOMMEND'

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SEVERAL LAWMAKERS SAY THEY ARE CONCERNED WITH THE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SITUATION FOR THOSE SOON-TO-GRADUATE

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AP PHOTO



Japan Neither the Japanese organizers nor the International Olympic Committee has said what it will cost to delay the Tokyo Games for one year. Early estimates range between \$2 billion and \$6 billion. Although officials say the added costs are unknown, one thing is certain: Japanese taxpayers will pick up most of the bills.

Iran The leader of the Revolutionary Guard warned yesterday he ordered his forces to potentially target the U.S. Navy after President Donald Trump's tweet a day earlier threatening to sink Iranian vessels. Iran separately summoned the Swiss ambassador, who looks out for America's interests in the country, to complain about Trump's threat.

AP PHOTO



Thailand It's rare to see a threatened species of sea mammal in shallow waters in southern Thailand but thanks to travel restrictions that have stripped popular destinations of crowds of tourists, a large group of dugongs has made their presence known. Drone video footage released by the Department of National Parks shows a 30-strong herd of dugongs on Wednesday off Libong island in Trang province.

Germany Two former members of Syria's secret police appeared in court in Germany yesterday accused of crimes against humanity for their role in a government-run detention center where large numbers of opposition protesters were tortured. The trial of Anwar R. and Eyad A. is the first time that two representatives of the Syrian government have faced trial abroad for war crimes.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MACAU SETS ASIDE BILLIONS TO TRANSFORM DAY VISITORS INTO OVERNIGHT TOURISTS

JULIE ZHU

THE government of Macau has reserved 3.19 billion patacas (\$400 million) for a project that will aim to turn single-day travelers into overnight visitors.

As overnight visitors spend on average considerably more than single-day travelers, the government hopes the transformation will boost aggregate tourism revenue even before the number of visitors recovers to pre-coronavirus levels.

Yesterday, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong brought the amendment of the 2020 budget to the Legislative Assembly plenary meeting. The amendment is related to the 10 billion pataca economy relief fund, which is part of the total 13.6 billion pataca increase in the 2020 budget.

The 10 billion pataca fund covers six programs encompassing a salary subsidy (3.84 billion patacas), freelancer subsidy (95.41 million patacas), business subsidy (2.42 billion patacas), freelancer bank loan interest subsidy (109 million patacas), paid training program (316 million patacas), and reserve fund (3.19 billion patacas).



The possibility of a third round of economic relief, and the reasons for entrusting the Macao Foundation to distribute the 10 billion patacas, were among the main topics of lawmakers' questions yesterday.

Some lawmakers, including Sulu Sou, Agnes Lam, and Wu Chou Kit, were concerned about those who were not covered by the existing government financial support measures, the purposes of the reserve fund, and how the government plans to prevent employers from taking advantage of the salary subsidies, for instance by laying off workers after receiving the money.

According to Secretary Lei Wai Nong's reply, the 3.19 billion patacas will be used to propel the local tourism industry in the post-Covid-19 environment.

The Macau SAR government wants to attract mainland visitors as the travel conditions in China improve. However, other countries in the region will also look to Chinese travelers to help their economies recover and may plan similar strategies of their own. Some of the government's funding will be used to ensure a steady flow of visitors returns to Macau in the wake of increased competition.

Moreover, the government believes revenue from tourism activities can be significantly expanded if Macau is able to transform the mainland's single-day travelers into overnight visitors.

"If a tourist leaves Macau on the same day they arrived, they end up spending 800 patacas. But if they stay for one night, they spend 2,600 patacas. Mainland tourists from free travel scheme cities spend 10% more when they stay for one night," said Lei.

The reserve fund is not only for tourism preparation, but also for other economic opportunities.

Some sectors, such as the

fishery industry, are also eligible for the subsidies as long they file a completed tax return. After the government announced salary and business subsidies, more companies completed and filed a tax return, according to the Secretary.

"If they are already prepared to disappear with the money, we will not give it to them," said Lei, indicating that these government subsidies clearly make a distinction between employees and employers, meaning that employers will be unable to take advantage of the financial support.

Lei highlighted that excise duty registration is the fundamental element for the approval of each subsidy. The SAR government will also include more sectors in paid training programs, such as the fishery sector. The SAR government is currently studying the feasibility of granting fishermen these subsidies.

Macau has nearly 80,000 companies, but, at this time, the government has determined that only around half of these companies are eligible for the subsidies. This is because the government has disqualified so-called "zombie companies" which have no income, no offices, and no associated costs.

IAS says some nurseries ignore suspension recommendation

ANTHONY LAM

THE Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), which oversees government-subsidized nurseries across the city, admitted yesterday that they could only "strongly recommend" that other nurseries suspend their services for the time being.

Choi Pui Ying, chief of the Division for Social Facility Licensing and Supervision of the bureau, was asked at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center's daily press conference why some nurseries have resumed operating.

She admitted that non-subsidized private nurseries are operating in res-

ponse to market demand. As many companies have resumed operations, the need for daycare services has re-emerged, the official explained.

"Actually, the nurseries that have resumed are only taking 10% of their capacity," Choi pointed out. "Also, they have notified us prior to their resumption [of service]."

Special arrangements have been made to protect health, according to Choi. For example, nurseries have distributed children across shortened sessions, so as to shrink the size of each session.

"Our nurses and staff have conducted spot che-

cks on these facilities to ensure safety," the official added.

Another reason behind nurseries reopening is that the normal admission period of nurseries commences around this time of the year. Nursery operators need to reopen to handle work and procedures in that respect.

SHERATON WRAPS UP MISSION

The largest hotel that the city has so far used as a quarantine facility, the Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, has officially been discharged from the mission, Inês Chan, head of the Department for Li-

censing and Supervision of the Macao Government Tourism Office, told yesterday's press conference.

After sanitization was carried out as instructed by the Health Bureau, the part that was used for quarantine purposes will resume offering short-term accommodation.

There are now only two hotels - the 300-room Golden Crown China Hotel and the 298-room Pousada Marina Infante - that are still being used as quarantine facilities. Now only 163 people remain in these two hotels.

Chan said that the local tourism board does not see a significant future

need for extra quarantine hotels, considering the special immigration measures enacted across the world.

ONE MORE RECOVERED

Another of the city's Covid-19 patients has recovered from the disease and has been transferred to the Public Health Clinical Center for recovery quarantine.

The recovered patient is a 32-year-old male resident, who is the fiancé of the city's 11th Covid-19 patient, a female flight crew member of Korean nationality. The duo returned to Macau from Porto, Portugal, with sto-

povers in Dubai and Hong Kong.

In contrast to his fiancée's immediate diagnosis upon arriving in Macau on March 15, the man did not test positive until near the end of his 14-day quarantine period. He was diagnosed on March 28.

He was hospitalized for 27 days. He did not develop pneumonia during his hospitalization.

Lo Iek Long, medical director of the Conde São Januário Hospital, explained that the patient was one of the mildest cases in the city, although he stayed in the medical facility for longer than some other Covid-19 patients.

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LYNZY VALLES



IKEA opens first store as booking slots filled until May 6

LYNZY VALLES

SWEDISH furniture giant IKEA has opened its first store in Macau to the public.

The retailer currently limits the number of people it allows into the store as it heeds the government's call to avoid social gatherings. Residents who have not yet registered for a date to visit the store may only enter after May 6. Until this date, all of the registered slots have already been filled.

IKEA Macau is the company's first store in Asia that does not set a one-way path through the store. Ideally, IKEA stores are designed with a one-way system, allowing customers to see the store's entire range of products and services.

However, due to the layout of the store located in Nova Grand, the store has two entrances and exits.

Approximately 90,000 square feet in size, the store is divided into three main categories: the bedroom, living room, and kitchen and dining areas.

At a media event yesterday for the soft opening, representatives said that the store has a total of 11 room settings and three real-life homes.

Some of the room settings and the real-life homes were created to emulate the normal home conditions of apartments, for example in Areia Preta.

The company said it visited local residences to assess the average size and layout of the city's apartments.

"We've used a real life situa-

tion to reflect the city's [average] living conditions so they can set it as their reference [in terms of the size and layout]," said a representative.

The room and real-life home settings are geared toward traditional families in Macau who live with their children – whether young or adult.

The samples of the settings also portrayed rooms with a newborn baby, a study room and offices, among others.

IKEA provides home furnishing inspiration for customers in Hong Kong and Macau through showrooms and its website and catalogue. Its product adaptation has been a part of the company's goal to satisfy local lifestyles and needs.

Currently, IKEA only allows re-

gistered customers to enter the store and has set up a website where guests can register. Registrations are already fully booked up until May 6.

IKEA currently has four sessions every day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., during which incoming guests are required to take precautionary measures such as wearing surgical masks and presenting health declaration forms.

The Times questioned representatives as to how many customers it will accommodate per three-hour time slot, however, company representatives were unable to provide a clear answer yesterday.

It was observed yesterday that from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., there was not more than 100 people shopping in the store at any one time.

During their allocated timeslot, customers are only permitted in the store for a maximum of three hours.

Despite the new two-floor store in Taipa, company representatives said that the pick-up center at the Macau Tower will remain.

Aside from furniture and home necessities, the store also includes the IKEA Bistro, Ikea Café, which can accommodate some 280 customers, and the famous IKEA Swedish Food Market.

Delivery fees start at 150 patacas, while installation fees are 15% of the product price. Self-service checkout for all items is also available.

IKEA Macau employs 120 staff, including delivery personnel.

IKEA is the only store that is open in the Nova Mall of Nova Grand. Other stores including Toys 'R' Us, Starbucks Coffee and other retailer brands have yet to open.

The hard launch ceremony for the store has been postponed due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation.

AIRPORT PASSENGER FLOW HALVES IN FIRST QUARTER

THE Macau International Airport saw a 50% year-on-year fall in its passenger flow during the first quarter, due to the onset of the pandemic.

During the first three months of 2020, the number of airport passengers fell to 2.33 million.

"Due to the epidemic triggered by Covid-19 since the beginning of this year, the demand for the aviation industry has slumped drastically," the Macau International Airport

Company (CAM) said in a statement.

Since late January, flights coming in and out of Macau have drastically decreased.

The plunge in passenger flow was also attributed to global travel restrictions, even during the usually busy Chinese Lunar New Year holiday period.

Meanwhile, the airport's cargo volume handled in the first quarter dropped by 25% compared to the same pe-

riod in 2019.

"CAM will continue doing its best to fulfill its pledges and follow up with the sixth repayment of shareholders' loans, as well as the distribution of the preferred dividends in 2020," CAM said in a statement.

The firm has also said that it expects some improvement in the regional aviation sector in the second quarter of this year, provided that the pandemic situation is brought under control. **LV**

CONSUMER PRICES GROW 2.47% IN MARCH, IN FASTER RISE THAN FEBRUARY

CONSUMER prices rose 2.47% in year-on-year terms in March 2020, according to information released by the Statistics and Census Service, showing that the rate of increase grew 0.14 percentage points from the growth in February (+2.33%).

The increment was attributable to higher

prices of fresh pork and petroleum products, dearer charges for eating out and rising rentals for dwellings, according to the data release.

Among the various sections of goods and services, the price index for food and non-alcoholic beverages rose 5.43%, while the index for education grew 5.14% in

year-on-year terms.

At the same time, the index for clothing and footwear fell 4.43%, while the communications price index dropped 8.89%.

The Composite Consumer Price Index reflects the impact of price changes on the general households of Macau. It is used by many as a key indicator of inflation. **LV**

ILLEGAL CRAB TRAP SET UP IN INNER HARBOR AREA

The Marine and Water Bureau has found an illegal crab trap in the Inner Harbor sea channel. The bureau urged members of the public to refrain from illegal trapping and fishing. According to a statement released by the bureau, the crab trap was 1,500 meters long and was concealed. When vessel administrators set up crab traps, they normally put up signs. However, in this specific case, there were no signs. Because of this, the trap could have posed a danger to other vessels if they had become entangled with it. Macau's law stipulates a maximum fine of 15,000 patacas for illegal fishing. Once the illegalities lead to an accident, the concerned people may also bear both civil and criminal responsibilities.

AVIATION AUTHORITY PUBLICIZES TFT REMODELING PLAN

The Civil Aviation Authority has publicized the plan for the remodeling of the Taipa Ferry Terminal (TFT) into the airport auxiliary passenger terminal. The auxiliary passenger terminal is planned to accommodate at least four airlines with daily operations at the early stage of implementation, with 12 to 16 check in counters, four boarding gates, and a floor area equivalent to a quarter of that of the TFT waiting lounges. It has a projected handling capability of 1.5 to 2 million passengers per year. The current four waiting lounges of the ferry terminal and neighboring shops (5,100 square meters in total) will be used as the check-in area for the airport. The 600-meter-long exclusive lane between the ferry terminal and the airport will become an airport-restricted road.

IAM PLANS SEWAGE PROJECTS FOR KA HO AND OUTER HARBOR

Within this year, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) will carry out sewage engineering works on Estrada do Alinho de Ka Ho and the Outer Harbor. Estrada do Alinho de Ka Ho has recorded road collapses due to the sewage damage caused by overloaded traffic. The bureau has already tended to the problem and is now drafting a plan for a more permanent improvement project at the said road. The bureau expects to start the construction process this year. The sewage network in the Outer Harbor area is also overloaded by traffic pressure and, as result, the IAM will also remodel the facilities in the affected area.



ANALYSIS | HIGHER EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY BUSINESS MODEL SHOULD NOT APPLY TO LOCAL UNDERGRADUATES

RENATO MARQUES
& LYNZY VALLES

The proposal of the Macau government to turn higher education into a new industry that can be more self-sufficient and less dependent on government funding seems to have been well-received by some within the university sector. Nevertheless, scholars and social affairs specialists are warning that such an idea should not apply to local undergraduates, but instead to students from abroad and students of graduate school programs.

That is precisely the opinion of social affairs commentator Larry So, who told the Times that he agrees in general terms with the idea that universities should depend less on public funding and establish a separation between local and non-local students.

"A lot of universities are already going into a self-sufficient or self-financed kind of approach," So said, adding, "but then, of course, this is not the same as [transforming the universities into] commercial enterprises that have to make money."

In the commentator's opinion, the government still has to subsidize the institutions to a

certain extent, but not students who are non-local residents.

So noted that the idea expressed by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng earlier this week in the presentation of the Policy Address is not new, but instead represents the adoption of a worldwide practice.

"This is a global practice right now. We can [divide] students into two categories: residents and non-residents. For those non-residents, they should be charged a higher school fee, two or three-fold higher," the commentator suggested. "We can also divide the university into two parts. At the undergraduate level, the government should continue to subsidize students in the same way [we are doing now], but only for undergraduates."

For the Master and Doctorate programs, the government can direct universities to use the so-called "enterprise approach."

Using this dual approach, So believes that the government can achieve both the commercial goal of running higher education as a business, but also continue to guarantee that local students have access to affordable undergraduate education.

"If the government decides to charge locals in the same way,

they will be discouraging the local students from staying," concluded So.

For education scholar Teresa Vong, the idea of self-sustainability in local universities can be understood in a broader sense. For the associate professor of the University of Macau's Faculty of Education, besides requiring "less dependency on public money," increased self-sufficiency might also include increasing enrolments to provide a wider range of courses and to allow a sufficient number of enrolments to keep costs reasonable.

For the scholar, the decision to "industrialize" higher education or, as she prefers to call it, "the commodification" of higher education, is a response to the current demographic situation.

As she told the Times, studies have shown that the number of secondary school graduates is declining in Macau, and elsewhere in the world.

"Only in 2030 will the number of [secondary school] graduates will return to a normal standard in Macau, around 7,000. The small number of the student population is translated into a high cost per capita," she explained.

Vong agrees that the introduction of market-driven forces (including competition and ma-

nagerialism) in higher education will change the landscape, which depends on demand and supply, not just locally, but around the globe.

The scholar also added that, for the time being, it is difficult to have a clear idea of what will be done, as "the government is going to create a committee to investigate this issue, so it is still too early to make substantial comments."

On the same topic, and in an interview with the Macao Daily News newspaper, the vice-rector of the Macau University of Science and Technology Lin Zhi-jun suggested that the government introduce a performance efficiency indicator for universities, so as to monitor and even drive their competitiveness.

For Lin, competition between universities should lead these institutions to increase the quality of their offerings for students and, as a consequence, raise the standard of Macau's higher education.

The vice-rector also expressed the feeling that local higher education has, over the last few years, accumulated several competitive advantages that should allow them to meet the commercialization goals outlined this week by the Chief Executive.

Macau students who study in Zhuhai may be exempted from quarantine

ANTHONY LAM

MACAU residents who receive foundational education in neighboring Zhuhai may be exempted from the mainland city's quarantine policy if they can show a negative Covid-19 test result from within the previous seven days, authorities in both cities have recently confirmed.

This exemption, however, only concerns those students who reside in Macau or are currently in Macau. Those residing in Zhuhai will not be required to take the test unless they have left the city in the past 14 days.

Foundational education in the neighboring city will resume in phases starting next Monday, April 27. The Macau education authority has announced that senior secondary education will resume May 4.

The Zhuhai authority disclosed that there are currently 1,061 teachers and students who are Macau residents and work at or are enrolled in foundational edu-

cation institutions in Zhuhai. Among them, just 83 are still in Macau.

Should they wish to be exempted from Zhuhai's quarantine measure when they attempt to return to work or study, they will be required to provide a certified negative Covid-19 test result taken within the previous seven days.

They should then submit the result to their respective schools in Zhuhai, which will handle the rest of the procedure for them. In some circumstances, they will be certified as "designated people" and be exempted from the 14-day quarantine.

Otherwise, these teachers and students will be required to follow the measures in effect in Zhuhai, which include a 14-day quarantine and a Covid-19 test.

The neighboring city's authorities stated that they have already notified teachers and students about the resumption, while reminding them to return to Zhuhai as soon as possible in order to comply with the measures.

At the Novel Coronavirus Res-

ponse and Coordination Center's daily press conference, journalists questioned whether the Health Bureau would make arrangements for these teachers and students.

The question was raised because the bureau has stated several times that it would not approve requests for Covid-19 testing unless the person making the request has a high risk of contraction or close contact with a confirmed case.

Officials from the bureau and the Public Security Police Force confirmed that an existing mechanism would be able to solve the problem.

The mechanism, enacted by both Zhuhai and Macau, provides convenience for these people by facilitating Covid-19 testing at the border connecting Macau and Zhuhai. Once these residents enter the neighboring city, they will be required to take the test at the border checkpoint.

However, they will still be required to undergo 14 days of home quarantine before resuming life in Zhuhai.

TEACHER SUSPENDED FOR MISCONDUCT LOSES APPEAL AT TOP COURT

RENATO MARQUES

THE Court of Final Instance (TUI) has dismissed the appeal filed by a teacher who had been suspended for 240 days as a result of a disciplinary action, the office of the president of the TUI informed in a statement.

According to the statement, the TUI ruled in favor of the school regarding an investigation that found that the teacher had failed in his duties by insulting and performing indecent acts upon students.

The teacher was accused of behaving disrespectfully and improperly with several primary school students between 2012 and 2015.

The list of transgressions included insults, kissing students on the cheek, and the inappropriate touching of female students on the neck, shoulders, hips and waist.

The ruling from the TUI held that the teacher had violated the general duties of civil servants as well as the specific duties contained within the code by the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ), which is applicable to all teaching staff.

For this reason, the director of the DSEJ decided to

apply a sanction of suspension from all duties for a period of 240 days. The teacher appealed his penalty to the courts.

Following an appeal to the Court of Second Instance (TSI), which upheld the original punishment, the teacher then appealed to the TUI.

In his appeal, the teacher claimed that the disciplinary procedures were imposed incorrectly, claiming that the accusations against him were not sufficiently specific and concrete, and that during his sentencing he was never heard and never had a chance to defend himself from the accusation or explain the facts.

Regarding the last appeal, the TUI said that all the facts pleaded by the defendant had already been addressed and sufficiently justified by the TSI and since he had not presented any new facts or allegations establishing the unfairness of the penalty that he had been subjected to, his appeal was considered unfounded.

The TUI also considered that the description of the acts performed by the teacher and that led to the disciplinary procedure was sufficient to allow him to present a proper defense.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Lawmakers raise employment concerns for soon-to-be graduates

JULIE ZHU

SEVERAL lawmakers have voiced their concerns regarding Macau's employment situation in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary session, lawmakers Lam Lon Wai, Lei Chan U, Ella Lei, Si Ka Lon and Chan Hong, among others, shared their thoughts on employment opportunities for the city's university students, current workers and talented immigrants.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the Macau SAR government has launched a series of supportive measures, including paid training

and financial support for freelancers. These measures are intended to protect jobs for specific groups of workers.

However, in Lam Lon Wai's opinion, the local government "obviously lacks" support for final year secondary school and university students who are about to enter the employment market.

Lam hopes that the government will launch a new round of employment support measures and provide more vacancies and a wider coverage of areas in order to include graduates in these benefits.

According to Lam, due to the impact of Covid-19, this year recorded fewer inter-

ship opportunities for students with degrees in hospitality, tourism and retail.

In 2019, nearly 88% of Macau's approximately 4,000 university graduates became employed in Macau. Nearly 55% of Macau residents studying outside of Macau showed an interest in returning to Macau after graduating from university. This year, Macau will also have about 4,000 university graduates, according to a survey conducted by the Higher Education Bureau.

Lawmaker Chan Hong expects there to be a higher number of Macau students choosing to stay in Macau for a job this year compared to 2018. Chan

suggested that the SAR government should carry out a university graduate employment and entrepreneurship survey in order to provide accurate support and job-matching to students.

Besides Lam and Chan, Ella Lei and Lei Chan U expressed their usual demands, such as protecting local workers and establishing a trade union law.

Also concerned about employment, Si Ka Lon advocated for new immigrants, in particular residence renewals for residents who immigrated to Macau through the investment immigration plan and the technical immigration plan.

GLOBAL READING DAY HELD ONLINE

THE activity "4.23 Reading in the City," which aims to encourage reading among the public, was carried out online this year.

The event, held yesterday on April 23, aims to encourage residents to open a book under the slogan, "Read actively and independently to gain valuable insights!"

The president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, (IC) Mok Ian Ian, is part of the group that leads the activity, and also serves as a "reading leader."

Mok, along with other activity leaders, introduced her favorite books to the public through videos.

To encourage reading among the public, the organizers recommended a variety of books - both printed books and e-books from the library's collection.

For book recommendations, residents can visit the Macao Public Library's website or the Macao Public Library page on Facebook.

In the video posted to the Facebook page, Mok recommends a book on the intangible cultural heritage of Macau.

The activity was jointly organized by the IC, and the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, and co-organized by the University of Macau and Macao Library and Information Management Association.

World Book Day aims to promote the importance of developing young readers and encourage a lifelong interest in literature. The global event is held annually every April 23, promoting the enjoyment of books and reading. LV

AP PHOTO



Exhausted AP staffers Olivia Zhang (center) and Sam McNeil (right) rest on the banks of the Yangtze River in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province

LEAVING WUHAN: GETTING INTO VIRUS-HIT CITY WAS THE EASY PART

SAM McNEIL

GETTING into Wuhan was the easy part.

New virus infections had fallen to almost zero and travel restrictions were easing. As a 76-day lockdown neared its end, journalists and others were allowed to enter the city in central China where the global pandemic started.

Getting out was more challenging. Hundreds of thousands of people were also trying to leave after being stuck for months in the metropolis of 11 million. The bureaucracy had yet to finalize how they would safely organize their return. Three official documents were needed: A green health code, home neighborhood approval and a re-

cent nucleic acid test.

Wuhan has gained notoriety as the origin of the disease but it has a long history as a fulcrum of change in China, a nation 1.4 billion and the world's second largest economy.

On Oct. 10, 1911, an "outbreak of serious revolutionary movement" erupted in the port city spread on either side of the Yangtze, China's mightiest river. As word spread, Associated Press correspondent J.R. Kennedy left Tokyo for Shanghai, then traveled upriver to cover the uprising against the

Manchu empire. Another reporter traveled with soldiers sent from Beijing to crush it.

People thronged the riverbank, all wearing masks; parents with children finally free to run and shout, nurses, fishermen, amorous couples and other joggers passing in the spring sunlight

"The city was a scene of desolation," read one AP report. "Corpses piled everywhere," said another.

Insurgencies soon broke out across China, and the tumultuous decades that followed saw occupation by Japan, civil war, and the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.

In 2020, international journalists came back to see once again how events in Wuhan might shape the entire world.

Few hotels were accepting foreigners and each neighborhood had different regulations. Some forced multiple nucleic acid tests on journalists and 48 hours of quarantine.

Ours did not, and as the final hours closed on Wuhan's lockdown, AP video producer Olivia

Zhang and I climbed atop the steel 1957 Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge to watch the countdown.

Skyscrapers and bridges radiated animated images of health workers aiding patients, along with one building displaying the words "heroic city," a title bestowed on Wuhan by President Xi Jinping.

Along the embankments and bridges, citizens waved flags, chanted "Wuhan, let's go!" and sang acapella renditions of China's national anthem.

One recently freed resident told us, "I haven't been outside for more than 70 days. ... Being indoors for so long drove me crazy." He seemed shell-shocked, yet happy.

The next day we went to Hankou Railway Station and filmed the first train departing for Beijing. In between government-arranged media trips over subsequent days, I donned a mask, laced up and ran to the river. The sky was icy blue, the air warm. A guard let me into a riverside park, but only after checking my phone for the green health code.

This code was generated

through WeChat, China's essential messaging app that includes e-payment for utility bills and donations to charity. Tencent, the app's owner, also added a function with algorithms that analyze a user's geolocation data to produce color codes of coronavirus infection risk: safe green, cautious yellow or dire red.

A green code is now required for most public life in China — a reminder of the state's constant data surveillance.

People thronged the riverbank, all wearing masks; parents with children finally free to run and shout, nurses, fishermen, amorous couples and other joggers passing as I took photos of the spring sunlight.

Before returning to Beijing there was a ritual. The first stop was a local hospital where we stepped through a box of grey decontaminant gas similar to an airlock. We then paid about \$40 to spit in a test tube that would return results in 48 hours.

Neighborhood permission was harder. Some allowed home quarantine, others required returnees to spend about \$700 on a 14-day quarantine in small hotel rooms. Catering is reportedly adequate.

With a green health code and neighborhood permission, people could then apply to Beijing's city government for permission to return home. Success came in the form of a phone message with a secret purchasing link when a ticket became available. The link expired in two hours.

Tickets bought, we packed up and prepared to leave. I went one last time to the Yangtze before we packed up and headed to the train station.

Back in Beijing, officials in white protective outfits herded us through biosecurity checks at the railway station and a commandeered city park that separated passengers into smaller and smaller groups based on their destination.

Three hours later, a government-chartered bus dropped me off at my apartment complex. Two officials in street clothes took me to my door where I signed a paper pledging that I would stay inside and record my temperature for 14 days. A new poster on my door implores my neighbors to help enforce the quarantine. An electronic sensor records any breaches.

As soon as I got home, I put my clothes in the wash and myself in the shower, thanking my wife for volunteering to quarantine with me and handing me a cold drink.

Eventually we will undergo nucleic acid tests to prove we're virus-free, but no symptoms have appeared so far.

A cool breeze blows in from our windows as the last days of springs slowly pass. **AP**

HUBEI PROVINCE REMAINS LOW-RISK AREA

ALL cities and counties in central China's Hubei Province, once hard hit by the Covid-19 epidemic, remain classified as low-risk areas, according to the latest assessment released by local authorities. No new confirmed cases or new deaths of the novel coronavirus disease were reported in Hubei Province on Wednesday, the local health authority said yesterday. According to the risk criteria defined in a guideline issued by

the joint prevention and control mechanism of the State Council, cities, counties, and districts with no newly confirmed cases in the last 14 days are categorized as low-risk areas, those with fewer than 50 cases or those with over 50 but without a concentrated outbreak are classified as mid-risk areas, and those with over 50 cases as well as a concentrated outbreak are classified as high-risk areas.

Emergency mode: European leaders still talking about what to do

MORE than 100,000 people are dead, the euro area is headed for its deepest ever recession - and Europe's leaders are still talking about what to do.

It's a strange way to tackle their worst emergency since World War II when it's already been going on for a couple of months. But in the European Union it seems it can't be any other way. Even a 2 trillion-euro (\$2.2 trillion) recovery plan drawn up by the bloc's civil service may take months before it sees the light of day. If it does at all.

While such a way of operating seems baffling to those more used to watching individual governments at work, European insiders insist it's all part of a necessary process. The national leaders have conflicting priorities and, in many cases, voters ready to give them a kicking if they're seen giving away too much, however noble the cause.

And yet, it's a riddle that all of them have to find a common way to solve - whether you are Mark Rutte of the fiscally conservative Netherlands or Giuseppe Conte of heavily indebted Italy, or even Viktor Orban, who has restricted democratic freedom in Hungary.

So it's no surprise that two months and four virtual meetings on from the first coronavirus death in Europe, expectations are low.

Finance ministers have lined up a 540 billion-euro package, unprecedented in itself, to address the continent's immediate needs. Progress on the longer-term rebuilding program is likely to be incremental at best.

Officials with knowledge of the preparations said that while agreement is growing around the perimeter of an economic reco-



A woman enjoys the sun on her balcony in Saint-Cloud, in the western suburbs of Paris

very plan, squabbling over the details will probably be the dominant feature. And they won't set deadlines.

That doesn't mean that, slowly but surely, a compromise isn't emerging. It always does.

"Everyone is aware that the future of the EU is at stake in how we respond to this extraordinary crisis," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said at a briefing in Paris on Tuesday. "All we've done to support our economies will be useless if we aren't able to decide on a massive, immediate and simple stimulus."

Europe is entering what is projected to be the steepest recession in living memory and the timing of the recovery will depend on factors largely outside the

control of policy makers, such as the availability of a vaccine or a cure for the disease.

The fallout from the pandemic is once more tearing at the fabric that holds the disparate group of nations together. That was the case in the Greek crisis a decade ago, with the 2015 influx of more than a million refugees and most recently with Brexit.

In short, the EU's been caught in the jaws of a permanent existential crisis for years and the process of staving off such threats can seem bewilderingly slow.

As the death toll increases, ideas about how to take on such an unprecedented menace have already been batted back and forth between leaders, their finance chiefs, envoys in Brussels and the

bloc's often lampooned bureaucracy.

At the heart of the discord over financing the recovery lie diverging views over how the EU should really work. Hard-hit southern countries like Italy and Spain are demanding joint debt issuance - to spread the financial strain across the whole bloc - but a group of governments led by Germany and the Netherlands has rejected this over fear that they'd be stuck with the bill.

In an effort to bridge the gap, France proposed a temporary fund financed by joint issuance, but operated for only a few years to kick-start the economy. That's the structure that leaders are converging on, but it's still not clear whether it will achieve what Fran-

ce (and many other countries) are hoping for.

While leaders have not yet received any specific proposals, the commission is floating a plan to mobilize about 2 trillion euros using both the next seven-year budget and a new financing mechanism. The compromise proposal was set out in an internal commission document seen by Bloomberg News.

Any solution must "be dedicated to deal with this unprecedented crisis" EU Council President Charles Michel, who will chair the discussion, said in a letter to leaders. "It should be of sufficient magnitude, targeted toward the sectors and geographical parts of Europe most affected." **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

UK mulls advice on face coverings while saving masks for NHS

THOMAS PENNY

THE U.K. is considering changing its guidance on people covering their faces to help prevent the spread of Covid-19, while protecting the supply of protective equipment to frontline health and care workers.

Ministers were due to receive advice yesterday after a meeting of scientific advisers on whether wearing cloth masks or scarves could slow in-

fections in confined environments, including work places and on public transport, according to a U.K. official familiar with the discussions.

Any move will aim to prevent asymptomatic people passing on the disease to others rather than stopping the wearer being infected. The central message will continue to be for people to stay home to stop transmission of the virus, and any advice will be limited to ensure the pu-

blic don't buy-up medical quality masks needed by the National Health Service.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has been fiercely criticized over its failure to provide adequate protective equipment for doctors and nurses, and will avoid any change in policy that would further jeopardize that supply, the person said. Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis told the BBC that no decision has

yet been taken.

"It's about assessing what is right, in terms of learning from people around the world and the experiences they've had, learning about how this virus moves and how it works," Lewis told BBC Radio. "We will take the advice of the scientists and medical advisers."

While Johnson's government has responded to claims it acted too slowly on the virus by saying it has been following the advice

of scientists, Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty emphasized at the daily televised Covid-19 briefing on Wednesday that it is ministers who have taken the decisions.

Martin Marshall, chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners, the body that represents the U.K.'s family doctors, said advising people to cover their faces would "make sense" to help stop the spread of the disease.

"The guidance we're

expecting to hear is that the wearing of face masks is a voluntary activity not mandated, and it certainly makes a lot of sense to focus limited resources that we have at the moment on those who have greatest need - and that's the health professionals," Marshall told BBC Radio. "It's perfectly reasonable to wear a bandanna around your mouth or whatever, that will work, it won't be quite as good but it will be good enough." **BLOOMBERG**

BLOOMBERG



Japan's gamblers are ignoring Abe's toothless emergency order

ISABEL REYNOLDS

LINES outside Tokyo's pachinko parlors show the limits of Japan's ability to enforce social distancing, just as the country heads into a series of holidays that could be key to its attempts to control the spread of the coronavirus.

Pachinko, a \$192 billion industry that lures gamblers with pinball-like machines, has come under scrutiny since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared a state of emergency in Tokyo and six other prefectures two weeks ago. As virus cases continued to climb in the country, topping 11,100 as of Tuesday, the emergency was extended nationwide.

While many non-essential businesses have voluntarily shut or cut hours in accordance with local government requests, there are no penalties for failure to comply and some pachinko parlors have remained open. Concerns have grown as gamblers risk spreading the virus by traveling in search of places to play.

"Where they are open in one area, I hear that people travel from other prefectures to gather there," Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, who heads the

government's response to the pandemic, said Tuesday. In a video call with regional governors, he promised to lay out guidelines by the end of Thursday on how to pressure businesses to comply.

Pachinko parlors already operate in a legal gray area, skirting anti-gambling laws by giving winners prizes that they can exchange for cash off the premises.

The issue is coming to a head as Japan braces for Golden Week, a series of public holidays from late April to early May that are among the most popular times to travel. The state of emergency is currently set to end May 6, though an extension is possible. Unlike countries including the U.K. and France, Japan hasn't introduced fines for leaving home unnecessarily.

Japan has thus far avoided the explosive surge in

cases seen in other parts of the world, but the number has been steadily increasing, and a wave of tourists from urban areas could rapidly worsen the situation in the regions, where the population tends to be elderly. Tourist hot spots have taken the unusual step of urging people not to visit, after a seaside resort saw traffic jams in sunny weather last Sunday.

Japan has thus far avoided the explosive surge in cases seen in other parts of the world, but the number has been steadily increasing

Abe in his emergency address on April 7 urged citizens to cut contact with others by at least 70% or 80%, warning infections in Tokyo could surge to 80,000 in a month if the current rate holds.

The Osaka prefectural government has received hundreds of complaints about businesses that have failed to close, with pachinko parlors being the most numerous, Governor Hirofumi Yoshimura said on Twitter Tuesday. He plans to have

officials contact each business individually, and will publish the names of those that continue to refuse to shut down, he said.

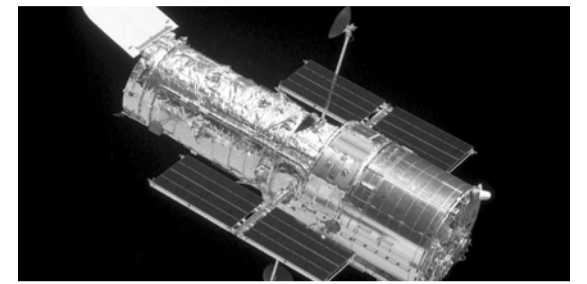
Large pachinko operators may be better positioned to close than smaller companies. Maruhan Corp., which operates 318 parlors, has gradually closed more than 200 of them, according to its website. Yunika Corp., which has continued to operate at least one of its handful of outlets in the Tokyo region, didn't respond to a request for comment.

Total sales for the industry amounted to about 20.7 trillion yen (\$192 billion) in 2018, according to a website operated by Daikoku Denko Co. using data from Japan Productivity Center.

Akiko Oishi, a former Osaka bureaucrat who is preparing to run in the next general election from the small opposition Reiwa Shinsengumi, said her conversations with business owners refusing to close show they were mostly doing so to avoid having to fold completely.

"The only way to ensure they close without putting them out of business is for the government to provide a lot of money," she said in an e-mail. "There's no other way out." **BLOOMBERG**

this day in history



1990 HUBBLE TELESCOPE TAKES OFF FOR SPACE

The American space agency Nasa has successfully launched the space shuttle Discovery from Cape Canaveral in Florida on its historic mission to carry the Hubble space telescope into orbit 380 miles (611.5 km) above the Earth.

The telescope will operate from high above the atmosphere, thus avoiding the interference which limits ground-based telescopes.

It will be able to see up to the edge of the known universe, taking images of objects and events which happened up to 14 billion years ago.

The telescope, the size of a railway carriage, has taken 20 years to build, at a cost of \$1.55 billion.

It has been dogged by technical hitches, huge budget overruns and other delays.

Its launch is seven years overdue, held up by problems in the space shuttle program, including the explosion of the Challenger shuttle in 1986.

The problems continued even once it was safely in space, as the British-made solar panel arrays which provide power for the six separate instruments on board malfunctioned.

However, scientists said they were expecting it to be difficult.

"Deploying the solar panels is technically more challenging than the launch of a shuttle one more time," said Nasa scientist Stephen Maran.

The fault was resolved, and now the telescope faces six months of testing before becoming fully operational.

Nasa hopes to release the first test image - of an open star cluster known as NGC 3532 - in about a week.

Hubble's main instrument is a finely-polished mirror 94 inches (240 cm) across.

There are also two cameras - one which can achieve image resolutions 10 times greater than that of even the largest Earth-based telescope, and a second which can detect an object 50 times fainter than anything visible from Earth.

"We are going to have the ability to observe the most distant objects, among the earliest in the universe, and thus probe the secrets of creation," said Nasa's chief scientist, Leonard Fisk.

The telescope will be controlled by the specially-created Space Telescope Science Institute at Baltimore.

It's thought Hubble's images will provoke a drastic revision of the shapes, sizes and content of galaxies already identified by ground-based telescopes.

It is also likely to find new stars and phenomena, and astronomers suggest the telescope provides the best chance yet of working out the true age of the universe.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

When the first pictures from Hubble came through, in May 1990, scientists were horrified. The images were blurred - no better than would have been produced by a telescope on Earth. Hubble's mirror had been made flatter than it should be by just one-fiftieth of the width of a human hair.

In December 1993, Hubble was repaired in orbit, in one of the landmarks of manned space flight.

A series of corrective mirrors were fixed to the telescope in an unprecedented series of five spacewalks in a single space shuttle flight.

Since the repair, Hubble has sent back a series of stunning photographs of deep space, and revolutionised thinking about the universe.

Among its most memorable images were startling pictures of Jupiter following the impact of Comet Shoemaker Levy 9 in 1994.

Between 2003 and 2004, instruments on Hubble were directed to a single spot in the sky to obtain the deepest-ever view of the universe.

The Hubble Ultra Deep Field, as it was called, showed the first stars beginning to shine, shortly after the moment when the universe was created 13.7 billion years ago.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Mull it over. Look again a few hours later and see if it actually seems doable! Right now, you need distance to gain clarity. If something is unclear, give it time and space. In a few days, it might surprise you.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You have to be open to hearing their opinions and advice. You don't have to follow it, of course. But you should hear them out in order to get a better understanding of how what they're saying could help you.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You could be very attracted to the odd and unusual today. What sticks out is much more interesting to you than what blends in, perhaps because you've been feeling like you don't quite fit in yourself.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

It takes a lot less energy to explore the unknown than you might think! You have plenty of time right now to research new things. Feed your curiosity regarding a different culture or food.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Whatever your reason, it's time to stop focusing so much on what you don't have (money, time, patience, support) and start focusing more on what you do have.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

It's only natural for you to feel a bit frustrated while you're trying to get your footing, but learning is key to growing. Give yourself time to grasp the concepts behind complicated issues.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Today, your daily routine could be disrupted, but it won't faze you at all. You have a solid focus on everything you need to take care of, so no distraction will be too much for you.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Talking about your hopes for the future is good. After all, it's the first step toward making them a reality. But have you been spending too much time talking and not enough time doing?



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Today, try to make a bigger effort to expand your horizons and open your mind to people, places, and beliefs that are out of your normal experience. They're nothing to fear!



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Put some of your creative writing skills to work on the e-mails you send to an authority figure and they'll look forward to receiving them every time. Your ideas will rise to the top of the pile.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

After all, something that isn't your problem isn't your problem! There is no wrong answer here, but you should at least stop for a moment to imagine what you would like if you were in their shoes.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Make no mistake, the most important relationship in your life is the one you have with yourself. And right now, you could use some time to work on it. Today, don't be shy about putting yourself first.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

3	5		2					
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6			2	7				

EASY+

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MEDIUM

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HARD

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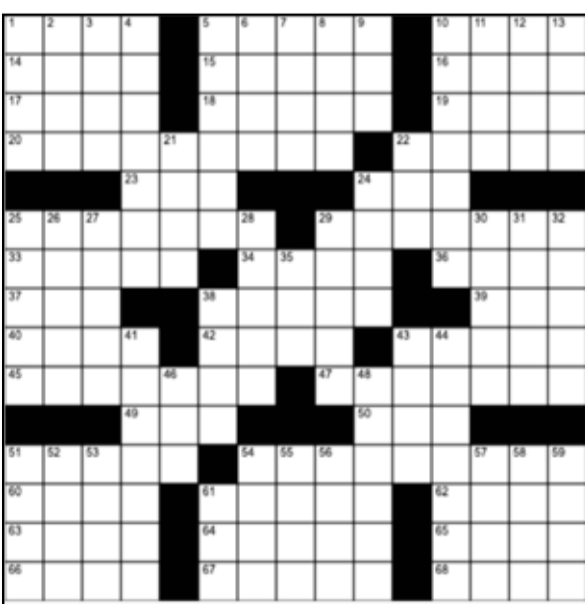
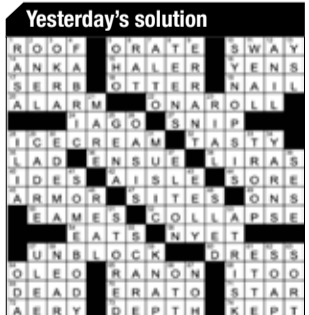
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	6	28	blowing dust
Harbin	-2	13	cloudy
Tianjin	10	25	clear
Urumqi	16	26	clear
Xi'an	6	25	clear
Lhasa	3	13	drizzle
Chengdu	14	22	cloudy
Chongqing	12	18	overcast
Kunming	11	16	drizzle
Nanjing	8	23	clear
Shanghai	12	23	clear
Wuhan	9	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	10	24	cloudy
Taipei	17	19	drizzle
Guangzhou	14	18	moderate rain
Hong Kong	17	20	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	4	10	drizzle
Frankfurt	10	21	cloudy
Paris	14	24	drizzle
London	8	20	clear
New York	8	12	moderate rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Flying stinger; 5- New York city; 10- ___ arms (angry); 14- I've Got ___ in Kalamazoo; 15- Flower segment; 16- Ralph Lauren brand; 17- ___ avis; 18- Small hill; 19- Some digits; 20- Jurisdiction of Charles or William; 22- Circumference; 23- ___-Bo; 24- Made a hole; 25- Try; 29- Angling; 33- Midway alternative; 34- Put on; 36- Salver; 37- Monopoly quartet; Abbr.; 38- One who cries "uncle?"; 39- Roadie's burden; 40- Carry; 42- Double curve; 43- Old stringed instruments; 45- Bottomless pits; 47- Calamity; 49- Animation unit; 50- City in GA; 51- Capital of Yemen; 54- Vain; 60- Take ___ from me; 61- Mother of Isaac; 62- Smooth sailing; 63- Tent stick; 64- Thorn; 65- Thick slice; 66- "Peter Pan" pirate; 67- Stately; 68- Greek T's;

DOWN: 1- "Star Trek" speed; 2- Culture medium; 3- Dress often worn by Hindu women; 4- Johnny Appleseed, notably; 5- Maintenance; 6- Shepherd; 7- Langston Hughes poem; 8- Composed; 9- Entirely; 10- Tense; 11- Wanting; 12- Belinda Carlisle's "Should ___ You In?"; 13- Snack; 21- Arrived; 22- Astronaut; 23- Grissom; 24- Calamitous; 25- Trunk line; 26- Palpitate; 27- Delicious; 28- Tiny branches; 29- Aspect; 30- Angry; 31- Titled; 32- Wanderer; 35- Shoebox letters; 38- Christmas; 41- One on the run; 43- Overdue; 44- Most gruesome; 46- Multitude; 48- Jacob's favorite wife; 51- Enervates; 52- Molecular component; 53- Egypt's river; 54- Headland; 55- Not a dup.; 56- "Peter Pan" dog; 57- Currency unit in Western Samoa; 58- Son of Isaac and Rebekah; 59- Ball belles; 61- Georgia, once; Abbr.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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FOR RENT

Manhattan Apartment, Taipa
\$20,800/mth 1,626 ft² 3 2

FOR SALE

[Taipa] *Wa Bao* 2 2
1,071 ft² \$7,995,000 (ref: 18115568)

[Taipa] *Taipa Village- two connected* 4 2
1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)

[Macau] *Unique Loft* 2 2
2,200 ft² \$9,990,000 (ref: 15115464)

[Coloane] *Large 3/4 bedroom* 2 3
2,530 ft² \$12,980,000 (ref: 19096000)

FOR RENT

[Macau] *Vai Fung Triplex, Macau* 2 2
1,065 ft² \$15,800/mth (ref: 19121001)

[Taipa] *Buckingham* 2 1
1,100 ft² \$15,900/mth (ref: 20031002)

[Taipa] *Manhattan* 3 2
1,626 ft² \$20,800/mth (ref: n/a)

[Coloane] *Ocean Garden* 4 4
3,700 ft² \$35,000/mth (ref: 18040674)

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數百年來，澳門冷靜沉穩，不屈不撓，平安度過重重難關

歷難彌堅 A RESILIENT CITY
 OVER THE CENTURIES MACAU HAS SURVIVED MANY TOUGH TIMES WITH PATIENCE, STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE

ON SALE

數百年來，澳門冷靜沉穩，不屈不撓，平安度過重重難關

OVER THE CENTURIES MACAU HAS SURVIVED MANY TOUGH TIMES WITH PATIENCE, STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

LINDSEY BAHR,
AP FILM WRITER

DRIVE IN

HEMSWORTH FINDS A WORTHY ACTION PIC IN 'EXTRACTION'

TYLER Rake sounds like a Mad-Libs action hero name. When you add to the mix that this character actually, literally kills someone with a rake, it starts to veer into parody territory. That's why it's somewhat surprising that the film built around that wonderfully silly name, "Extraction," is entirely sincere and also pretty fun.

"Extraction," on Netflix Friday, is a straightforward shoot-em-up about a jaded mercenary, Mr. Rake, played by Chris Hemsworth, who's hired to save the 14-year-old son of a drug lord from another drug lord in Bangladesh. It doesn't do anything to push the genre forward, but it's better than you might think, existing comfortably somewhere on the action flick spectrum between Tony Scott and Peter Berg.

Much of that rests on Hemsworth's (very large) shoulders. The Australian actor hasn't had the easiest job finding solid roles outside of Thor. He's always good even when the movie isn't, and obviously has some tricks up his sleeves that belie his action-hero physique. But many of his leading man roles that don't have anything to do with the God of Thunder have come and gone without much fanfare. So it makes a certain amount of sense that "Extraction" is Marvel-adjacent. It's written by Joe Russo (one

AP PHOTO



half of the Russo brothers who have directed a handful of Marvel movies, including "Avengers: Endgame"), directed by Marvel stunt coordinator Sam Hargrave in his debut and based on a graphic novel ("Ciudad").

The graphic novel origins help explain "Tyler Rake," but that name is about the extent of the comic book elements in the actual film. And, to be fair, "Extraction" even knows it's ridiculous, hence the

rake and the fact that the 14-year-old asset Ovi (Rudhraksh Jaiswal) walks up to the line of making fun of it at one point.

The film begins at the end, showing Tyler Rake (it just feels more right to say his full name) bloodied, battered and near-death on a bridge, having blurry flashbacks to some feet in the sand before cutting to two days earlier in Mumbai. (Don't hate "Extraction" for its cliches, they're

just part of the fun).

It won't shock you to learn that Tyler Rake is a bit of a loner who keeps his living quarters in shambles, but you get the sense that he always knows where the bottle of Oxy is. A woman (Golshifteh Farahani) comes to him with the job to save the kid, whose father is in prison, and Tyler Rake sets off to Dhaka to track him down. There, the criminal underworld plays out in broad daylight, with crime bos-

ses, child soldiers, corrupt police and an overall vibe of instability populating the streets. Tyler Rake finds the kid easily enough, but then things start to get more complicated when he discovers that he's not the only one looking for Ovi (and ready to kill to get him).

But don't despair, Tyler Rake has about two hours of non-stop fight in him before he gets to that bridge and the blurry flashbacks. He'll fight, and win, against anyone who comes in his way — even a group of kids. He doesn't kill any of them, though. He just kind of injures and disables the "Goonies from hell."

The word distraction has started to lose all meaning this deep into our home lockdowns, but there is a certain comfort in curling up with a big, silly action pic like "Extraction." It reminds you of something you might have spent money on to see in an ice-cold theater on a hot summer day.

"Extraction," a Netflix release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "strong bloody violence throughout, language and brief drug use." Running time: 118 minutes. ★★☆☆

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OPINION

World Views

Clara Ferreira Marques, Bloomberg

**DIAMONDS NEED SOME
 NEW BEST FRIENDS**

It's looking decidedly somber out there for the world's favorite sparkly stone.

Diamonds were ailing even before the coronavirus came along. Now, weeks into lockdowns in the U.S. and elsewhere, all but the largest diggers, polishers and retailers are struggling for cash. Unable to sell its stones, Dominion Diamond Mines, the miner that sold luxury brand Harry Winston to Swatch Group AG in 2013, filed for insolvency protection late Wednesday. Anglo American Plc's De Beers cut 2020 production guidance by a fifth Thursday, in line with demand.

To secure their future, diamond giants may need a rebranding akin to the storytelling feat pulled off by Harry Oppenheimer, the late De Beers chairman who cultivated the engagement ring to overcome a slump after the Great Depression. In so doing, he forged a tradition that fueled sales for decades. Today, a refreshed myth-making effort could target the post-pandemic concerns of millennial consumers: marketing the diamond as a store of value in volatile times comparable to art, which is also authentic, traceable and sustainable.

Since 2011, when prices peaked thanks to China's new shoppers, diamonds have faltered. Lab-grown stones, initially priced confusingly close to the real thing, posed a challenge. To make things worse, a supply glut hit the market, pushing producers to cut prices. A 26-million-carat increase in 2017 was the largest single-year volume addition since 1986, according to consulting firm Bain & Co. Meanwhile, financing availability shrank dramatically as traditional lenders pulled away. A 2018 fraud scandal involving celebrated Indian jeweler Nirav Modi didn't help.

The coronavirus will accelerate some developments that aren't unwelcome. In supply terms, the industry may look healthier if older or more marginal mines are obliged to stop digging. Rio Tinto Group last year had already announced the 2020 closure of its Argyle mine, which produces both low-quality gems and fabled pink diamonds, taking some 13 million carats out of global annual production of just over 140 million. The current crisis will add to that. In March, Dominion stopped work at its Ekati mine in Canada, and other pits have been closed or are working only partially. Not all will return.

The scale of this health crisis, rapidly turning into an economic cataclysm, has also made other problems far worse. India's polishers are not only strapped for credit, but also struggling with a weaker rupee, lockdowns and curfews; Thousands of workers have been forced to leave hubs like Surat altogether. Elsewhere, both diamantaires and jewelry buyers are stuck at home, making it harder to clear excess inventory. The flow of diamonds has dwindled to barely a trickle.

The real concern is demand, where a grim outlook for disposable incomes suggests a hoped-for 2020 recovery is impossible, even as supply shrinks. The very top of the market may be insulated, but further down even China's "revenge purchases" aren't going to be enough. As my colleague Nisha Gopalan has pointed out, such splurges won't save luxury products — especially if U.S. job losses continue to pile up. Inventory could flood the market, too.

All this upheaval does makes it a good time to rethink the storytelling behind diamonds, though. Coordinated marketing, once the industry's go-to solution, will need to make a comeback as consumers emerge from the wreckage of coronavirus. Post-pandemic values may change broadly.

Three things could be highlighted. First, a store of value for the long term, especially for the largest gems where prices vary less. Like art, or fine wine, only wearable. Better yet, to appeal to the millennials that make up its consumer base, the industry can promote the stones' authenticity, building on existing work around provenance and traceability, dating back to the Kimberley Process, the multilateral system aimed at ensuring the proceeds of diamond mining aren't used to fund conflict. The industry is also sustainable, with relatively clean, chemical-free processes. [Abridged]

The German government has condemned an anti-Semitic incident that took place during an online Holocaust memorial event organized by the Israeli Embassy in Berlin.

Unknown persons interrupted the Zoom meeting with Holocaust survivor Zvi Herschel late Monday by shouting anti-Semitic slogans and displaying pictures of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. Berlin police confirmed that a criminal investigation has been opened.

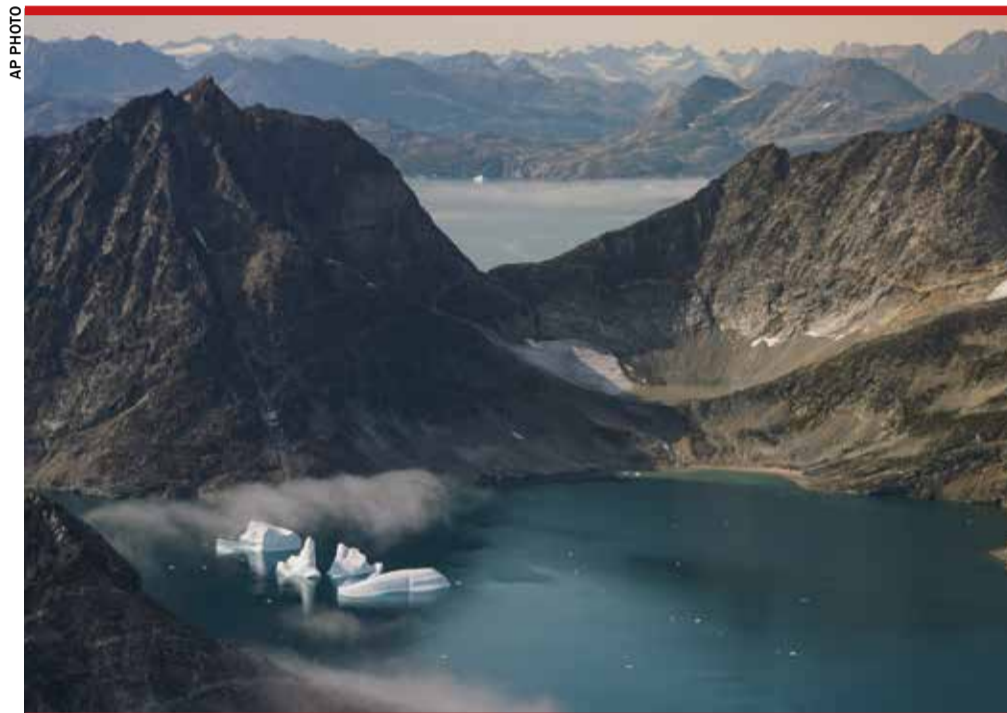
German government spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters Wednesday that the incident was "a disgrace, a despicable act."

Seibert said the government expressed its deep regret to the embassy and to Herschel, who lost most of his family in the Holocaust. Herschel, who was born in 1942 in the German-occupied Netherlands, survived after being taken in by a Dutch Protestant family.

"The vast majority of Germans and the German government are firmly resolved to stand up to any form of anti-Semitism in our country," Seibert added.

Israel's ambassador to Germany, Jeremy Issacharoff, said on Twitter that the event had to be briefly paused due to the disruption.

**US TO BOOST AID TO
 GREENLAND IN BID TO
 COUNTER RUSSIA, CHINA**



MATTHEW LEE
 & JAN OLSEN

THE Trump administration is poised to announce an expanded diplomatic presence in Greenland and a new assistance package for the vast island aimed at thwarting growing Chinese and Russian influence in the Arctic.

The announcement will come less than a year after President Donald Trump drew derision for expressing an interest in buying Greenland. Already, suggestions of a greater U.S. presence in Greenland have been met with criticism in Denmark, of which the island is part.

U.S. and European officials say the administration, along with Greenland's government, will announce the opening of a U.S. Agency for International Development office at the new American consulate in the capital, Nuuk, and at least \$12 million in new aid projects.

The American ambassador to Denmark, Carla Sands, previewed the announcement when she wrote in an online publication this week that the United States could offer "a substantial package of economic aid" to Greenland and would be "the preferred partner in the Arctic."

In the news outlet Altin- get, Sands accused Russia

of "aggressive behavior and increased militarization in the Arctic" and China of pursuing "predatory economic interests" in Greenland.

That sparked harsh reactions in Denmark.

"They have clearly crossed the line," said Carsten Hoenge, an outspoken member of the left-leaning Socialist People's Party that supports the Social Democratic minority government. He said Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen must "take action" to clarify relations with United States. "We must draw a line in the ice cap," Hoenge told Altin- get on Wednesday.

The U.S. Agency for International Development office in Nuuk will initially oversee the handling of at least \$12.1 million in new U.S. assistance for Greenland that is intended mainly to boost the energy and tourism sectors and blunt Chinese and Russian influence, the officials said. They were not authorized to speak to the matter publicly before the formal announcement and spoke on condition of anonymity.

When the State Department notified Congress in January that it intended to move ahead with both steps, the department said that Washington "considers Greenland to be strategically important, particular-

ly as China and Russia become more engaged in the region."

The department told lawmakers at the time that they would "help counter malign Chinese and Kremlin influence by supporting Greenlanders to build their capacity, resilience and self-reliance."

Last August, Trump's desire to buy Greenland, a semi-autonomous part of the Denmark, emerged in press reports in Washington. Greenland Premier Kim Kielsen said then that the island was not for sale, adding: "Greenland is not Danish. Greenland is Greenlandic. I persistently hope that this is not something that is seriously meant."

Retreating ice could uncover potential oil and mineral resources in Greenland which, if successfully tapped, could dramatically change the island's fortunes. But no oil has yet been found in Greenlandic waters and 80% of the island is covered by an ice sheet that is up to 3 kilometers thick, which means exploration is only possible in coastal regions.

Even there, conditions are far from ideal, due to the long winter with frozen ports, 24-hour darkness and temperatures regularly dropping below minus 20 Fahrenheit (minus 30 Celsius) in the northern parts. AP



Turkey A Turkish Airlines plane flew over the country yesterday making the shape of the country's flag with its flight path to mark centennial celebrations for the founding of Turkey's parliament. The celebrations for Turkey's National Sovereignty and Children's Day were changed due to the coronavirus pandemic, with authorities replacing parades and school ceremonies with observances in line with social distancing efforts.



Australia A cruise ship that is the subject of a criminal investigation after it became Australia's largest single source of coronavirus infections set off from the country's shores yesterday a month after it was ordered by police to leave. The Ruby Princess has been linked to 19 deaths in Australia and two in the United States.



European Union leaders are set to weigh the damage the coronavirus has inflicted on health care systems and the lives of around half a billion citizens across the bloc as they struggle to devise a more robust plan to resuscitate their ravaged economies. The 27 leaders will endorse a series of urgent spending measures and debate a massive recovery plan they hope to introduce in coming weeks.

More on p7



Belgium European countries are designing contact tracing apps for mobile phones to help locate outbreak sources. While they're a powerful force for good, the various devices are raising concerns about privacy and just how intrusive they might become. The bracelets are worn like a watch and vibrate when they move to within three meters of each other.